

ASFACTS 2012

JULY "SUMMER RAINS, STUPID DRAINS" ISSUE

ROGERS & DENNING HOSTING PRE-CON PARTY

Patricia Rogers and Scott Denning will uphold a local fannish tradition when they host the Bubonicon 44 Pre-Con Party 7:30-10:30 pm Thursday, August 23, at their home in Bernalillo – located at 909 Highway 313.

The easiest way to reach the house is north on I-25 to exit 242 east (Rio Rancho's backdoor and the road to Cuba). At Highway 313, turn right to head north. Look for the Country Store, the John Deere sign and Mile Marker 9. Their house is on the west side of the road, with plenty of parking on the shoulder.

In addition to socializing, attendees can help assemble the membership packets, and check out the 2012 con t-shirt with artwork by Ursula Vernon.

Please bring snacks and drinks to share, plus plates, napkins, cups and some ice. As with any hosted party, please help keep the house clean and in good shape!

BUBONICON FRIEND AMONG ANNOUNCED NEBULA WINNERS

The 2011 Nebula Awards were presented on May 19, 2012, in a ceremony at the Nebula Awards Weekend, held in Arlington, Virginia. Walter Jon Williams was Toastmaster, and Astronaut Michael Fincke was the keynote speaker. CONNIE WILLIS, Bubonicon friend, was honored with the 2011 Damon Knight Grand Master Award for her lifetime and achievements in the field.

Novel: *Among Others* by Jo Walton; Novella: "The Man Who Bridged the Mist" by Kij Johnson; Novelette: "What We Found" by Geoff Ryman; Short Story: "The Paper Menagerie" by Ken Liu; Ray Bradbury Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation: *Doctor Who: "The Doctor's Wife"*; and Andre Norton Award for Young Adult Science Fiction and Fantasy Book: *The Freedom Maze* by Delia Sherman.

Octavia Butler and John Clute received the Solstice Award. Bud Webster received the SFWA Service Award.

FAHREINHEIT 451 LEGEND DIES

From CNN.com

Science fiction author Ray Bradbury, whose imagination yielded classic books such as *Fahrenheit 451*, *The*



Martian Chronicles and *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, died June 5 after a lengthy illness. He was 91 years old.

Bradbury "died peacefully [in the] night, in Los Angeles, after a lengthy illness," his publisher, HarperCollins, said in a written statement.

Bradbury's books and 600 short stories predicted a variety of things, including the emergence of ATMs and live broadcasts of fugitive car chases.

"In a career spanning more than 70 years, Ray Bradbury has inspired generations of readers to dream, think and create," the statement said. "A prolific author of hundreds of short stories and close to 50 books, as well as numerous poems, essays, operas, plays, teleplays and screenplays, Bradbury was one of the most celebrated writers of our time."

Bradbury wrote the screenplay for John Huston's classic film adaptation of *Moby Dick*. He adapted 65 of his stories for TV's *The Ray Bradbury Theater* and won an Emmy for his teleplay of *The Halloween Tree*.

UPCOMING ASFS MEETINGS

- **August 10, 2012:** Preview of Bubonicon 44, some kind of game show, and announcements of Bubonicon 45 chair candidates.
- **August 17:** Bubonicon 44 Gofer Gathering. Be on hand to pick your work hours & receive bribes.
- **September 21:** Bubonicon 44 & Chicago Worldcon reports. Also, election of the Bubonicon 45 chair if needed (voting rules will apply). Note: This meeting is a week later than usual.
- **October 12:** Election of 3 club officers & something fun. Plus the Halloween issue of *ASFACTS* (deadline Sunday, October 7).
- **November 9:** An interesting talk, we hope.
- **December 14:** Dessert Cook-Off and Holiday Film Shorts. Plus the annual issue of *SithFacts*.

Craig Chrissinger, normal editor. Darth Vader, guest editor each December. Please Send All Correspondence to — PO Box 37257, Albuquerque, NM 87176-7257. Phone: (505) 266-8905. E-mail: cwrcraig@nmia.com. *ASFACTS* published February, April, July & October for the Albuquerque SF Society. *SITHFACTS* out each December. NEXT DEADLINE: Sun, Oct 7. **Club Officers:** Kevin Hewett & Craig Chrissinger, co-Zec Secs (505) 266-8905. Jessica Coyle, Moderator. Randi Hewett, Alternator. HAL 9000, Advisor. **Bubonicon Co-Chairs:** Kristen Dorland (505) 459-8734 & Craig Chrissinger. Rats! Don't Panic.

"In my later years I have looked in the mirror each day and found a happy person staring back," he wrote in a book of essays published in 2005. "Occasionally I wonder why I can be so happy. The answer is that every day of my life I've worked only for myself and for the joy that comes from writing and creating. The image in my mirror is not optimistic, but the result of optimal behavior."

Ray Douglas Bradbury was born August 22, 1920, in Waukegan, Illinois. He moved with his family to Los Angeles in 1934, at age 13, and in 1937 discovered the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society. Through that organization he met Forrest J Ackerman, Hannes Bok, Edmond Hamilton, Ray Harryhausen, Robert A. Heinlein, Henry Kuttner, and many other friends who would go on to become SF luminaries.

Bradbury's death brought immediate reaction from his literary and film peers, as well as the White House.

"For many Americans, the news of Ray Bradbury's death immediately brought to mind images from his work, imprinted in our minds, often from a young age," President Obama said. "His gift for storytelling reshaped our culture and expanded our world. But Ray also understood that our imaginations could be used as a tool for better understanding, a vehicle for change, and an expression of our most cherished values. There is no doubt that Ray will continue to inspire many more generations with his writing, and our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends."

Director Steven Spielberg said, "He was my muse for the better part of my sci-fi career. He lives on through his legion of fans. In the world of science fiction and fantasy and imagination he is immortal."

Bradbury received the 2000 National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters, the 2004 National Medal of Arts and a 2007 Pulitzer Prize Special Citation. Bradbury had lived in Los Angeles since his family moved there from his native Waukegan, Illinois, to look for work during the Great Depression.

He is survived by his four daughters, Susan Nixon, Ramona Ostergren, Bettina Karapetian and Alexandra Bradbury, and eight grandchildren. His wife of 57 years, Marguerite, died in 2003.

The biography released by his publisher quoted a story in which Bradbury recounted meeting a carnival magician, Mr. Electrico, in 1932. Electrico touched the 12-year-old Bradbury with his sword and commanded, "Live forever!"

"I decided that was the greatest idea I had ever heard," Bradbury said. "I started writing every day. I never stopped."

Sam Weller, Bradbury's biographer and friend, said in a posting on his website June 6, "I'll never see you again. I'll never see you again. I'll never see you again."



WILD THINGS AUTHOR DIES

From NYTimes.com

Maurice Sendak, widely considered the most important children's book artist of the 20th century, who wrenched the picture book out of the safe, sanitized world of the nursery and plunged it into the dark, terrifying and hauntingly beautiful recesses of the human psyche, died May 8 from complications of a recent stroke in Danbury, Conn. He was 83 years old.

Roundly praised, intermittently censored and occasionally eaten, Sendak's books were essential ingredients of childhood for the generation born after 1960 or thereabouts, and in turn for their children. He was known in particular for more than a dozen picture books he wrote and illustrated himself, most famously *Where the Wild Things Are*, which was simultaneously genre-breaking and career-making when it was published in 1963.

Among the other titles he wrote and illustrated are *In the Night Kitchen* (1970) and *Outside Over There* (1981), which together with *Where the Wild Things Are* form a trilogy; *The Sign on Rosie's Door* (1960); *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* (1967); and *The Nutshell Library* (1962), a boxed set of four tiny volumes.

Sendak's work was the subject of critical studies and major exhibitions; in the second half of his career, he was also renowned as a designer of theatrical sets. His art graced the writing of other eminent authors for children and adults, including Hans Christian Andersen, Leo Tolstoy, Herman Melville, William Blake and Isaac Bashevis Singer.

In 1964, the American Library Association awarded Sendak the Caldecott Medal, considered the Pulitzer Prize of children's book illustration, for *Where the Wild Things Are*. His other awards include the Hans Christian Andersen Award for Illustration, the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award and, in 1996, the National Medal of the Arts, presented by President Bill Clinton. Twenty-two of his titles have been named New York Times best illustrated books of the year.

Maurice Bernard Sendak was born in Brooklyn on June 10, 1928; his father, Philip, worked in the garment district of Manhattan. Sendak's companion of a half-century, Eugene Glynn, a psychiatrist who specialized in the treatment of young people, died in 2007. Sendak's personal assistant, Lynn Caponera, worked for him almost as long while living at his Ridgefield home. No immediate family members survive.

2012 Locus Awards Named

The winners of the 2012 Locus Awards were announced on June 16 during the Locus Awards Weekend in Seattle, WA. Among the winners are Santa Fe's George R.R. Martin, former Bubonicon toastmaster Gard-

ner Dozois, and next year's Bubonicon co-GoH Tim Powers. A full list appears below.

Science Fiction Novel: *Embassytown* by China Miéville; FANTASY NOVEL: *A DANCE WITH DRAGONS* BY GEORGE R.R. MARTIN; First Novel: *The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern; Young Adult Book: *The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairyland in a Ship of Her Own Making* by Catherynne M. Valente; Novella: *Silently and Very Fast* by Catherynne M. Valente.

Novelette: "White Lines on a Green Field" by Catherynne M. Valente; Short Story: "The Case of Death and Honey" by Neil Gaiman; ANTHOLOGY: *THE YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION: TWENTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL COLLECTION* EDITED BY GARDNER DOZOIS; COLLECTION: *THE BIBLE REPAIRMAN AND OTHER STORIES* BY TIM POWERS; Non-Fiction: *Evaporating Genres: Essays on Fantastic Literature* by Gary K. Wolfe; Art Books: *Spectrum 18: The Best in Contemporary Fantastic Art* edited by Cathy Fenner & Arnie Fenner.

Artist: Shaun Tan; Editor: Ellen Datlow; Magazine: *Asimov's*; Publisher: Tor.

HELP NEEDED AT BUBONICON

It's true! Volunteers or "gofers" are needed to help out at Bubonicon 44 the weekend of August 24-26 at the Albuquerque Marriott Uptown. We're looking for people who can donate three, five or even 10 hours of their time during the con to help things run smoothly and give committee workers much needed breaks from time to time.

It should be noted that some positions require the handling of money, so make sure you let the con-com know if you are uncomfortable with that. We especially need people to check badges at doors to meeting rooms, the gaming space and the con suite this year.

Volunteer workers will receive some sort of promo swag, and be in a drawing for additional goodies!

The Volunteers (Gofers) Organizational Meeting will take place 7:30 pm Friday, August 17, at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, 5301 Ponderosa Ave NE (between San Mateo and San Pedro, south of Montgomery). All attending volunteer workers at this meeting will receive some kind of goodies, be it chocolate, a t-shirt or other promotional materials.

If you're willing to help us out, please email Julie Pascal at julie@pascal.org.

LOCAL ARTIST/FAN PASSES AWAY

Randy W. Clark, former member of the Albuquerque SF Society and past organizer of the Bubonicon art show, died on June 28 in his home from complications of spinal stenosis. He was 48 years old.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Clark helped to organize Bubonicon's art show and often contributed

artwork for convention fliers and program books. His artistic talent also led to inking assignments on *The Badger* (First Comics), created by Mike Baron, and a *Parts Unknown* mini-series (Eclipse) with writer Beau Smith. He also worked on storyboards for two episodes of the animated series, *The Real Ghostbusters*.

In the field of amateur publications, he also founded an APA – WUTA – and contributed to its successor, *SLAG*; as well as contributing illustration pieces for the local *Alpha Centura Communicator*, Marty Cantor's *Holier Than Thou*, Craig Chrissinger's *Desert Sun*, and other fanzines.

Clark, known for his pin-up influenced artwork, also experimented with fine art techniques and colors in his adulthood. He created a wall mural for the now-gone Merlin's Record Workshop, as well as business cards and letterheads for small Albuquerque businesses.

His art career came to a halt with the advent of his spinal stenosis, which began to be noticeable to him six or seven years ago. In November 2008, he fell and hit his head before a surgical procedure to help with the stenosis. As a result, he was paralyzed from the waist down for the rest of his life and confined to a wheelchair. The spinal surgery still was performed, and did not seem to help nor hinder with the effects of the stenosis.

In addition to his artwork, Clark also enjoyed playing guitar, fencing, a wide range of books, and horror and science fiction movies.

Born November 13, 1963, in Albuquerque, he is survived by two older brothers and an older sister, as well as many nieces and nephews.

GENRE BOOKS STILL DISCUSSED

The Droids & Dragons SF Book Group meets 7:30 pm Monday, July 16, in the greeting cards area of Page One to discuss *Body, Inc* by Alan Dean Foster. The group then focuses on Bubonicon 45 co-GoH Tim Powers' *Three Days To Never* on August 20.

Meetings of D&D are open to all interested readers on the third Monday of each month. Books for discussion are chosen two months in advance, and group members receive a 20% discount on selected novels. For more information, contact Yvonne at piebald@juno.com or Craig at 266-8905.

FIREFLY SPECIAL TO AIR IN NOVEMBER

It's been 10 years since Joss Whedon's short-lived space cowboy series *Firefly* graced the small screen for its initial run – but it's finally coming back. Well, kinda.

Fans of the TV show have already heard the cast and crew are set to hold a 10-year reunion this weekend at San Diego Comic-Con, but now it seems the Science Channel will be shooting a documentary around the panel, which

will air in November. When it does, they hope the Browncoats will unite for *Browncoats Unite*.

SyFy's Blastr reported in mid-July that the segment will feature interviews with the likes of Nathan Fillion and Joss Whedon, as well as a behind-the-scenes roundtable Q&A to delve deeper into the series.

The Science Channel may seem like an odd fit, but the cable network has had huge success with the cult fave series in syndication and hopes some new Firefly-related content will do even better.

"*Firefly* is a landmark work of science fiction and a favorite with our viewers," Science Channel VP Debbie Myers said. "Ever since it premiered on Science, fans have asked us to do something special to mark its 10-year anniversary. With this signature celebration, punctuated by *Browncoats Unite*, we will connect the minds behind this classic franchise with its legions of passionate fans."

The documentary will air on Sunday, November 11, along with a daylong marathon of *Firefly*.

CHUCK CONFIRMS HE'LL BE IN THOR 2

Zachary Levi has confirmed a long-rumored role – that he'll indeed be swashbuckling his way to *Thor 2* alongside Chris Hemsworth's God of Thunder.

The newly bearded and former *Chuck* star confirmed June 10 on the Tonight Show that he will play the role of Fandral, one of the Warriors Three, in *Thor 2*, reports SyFy's Blastr.

Levi was originally cast in the role but had to drop out at the last minute due to his filming commitments to the final season of NBC's *Chuck*. The role had then gone to future *Once Upon a Time*'s Prince Charming himself: Joshua Dallas.

Now, in totally irony, it's Dallas who's currently unavailable to return as Fandral because he's back to pulling duties as Charming on the second season of *Once Upon a Time* while *Thor 2* is set to be filming.

Thor 2 will be directed by fan-favorite *Game of Thrones* director Alan Taylor, who'll also be making his feature-film debut.

Chris Hemsworth, Tom Hiddleston, Natalie Portman, Idris Elba and Anthony Hopkins are all set to return, while Mads Mikkelsen is in negotiations to play the villain. *Thor 2* is set to be released on November 8, 2013.

On The Convention Front:

BUBONICON 44 JUST SIX WEEKS AWAY

by Craig Chrissinger, co-chair

Bubonicon, New Mexico's annual science fiction convention, celebrates its 44th edition August 24-26 at the Albuquerque Marriott Uptown, 2101 Louisiana Blvd NE (at I-40). More than 45 authors, artists, scientists, filmmakers & fans will be participating in programming.

This year's convention features special guest talent

from the East Coast, Los Angeles and Utah. Guest of Honor for Bubonicon 44 is Provo novelist Brandon Sanderson; Guest Artist is Ursula Vernon of North Carolina; and Toastmaster is LA resident Michael Cassutt.

Other participants come from New Mexico, California, Texas and Colorado. The participating newcomers to Bubonicon this year are authors Loretta Hall, Caroline Spector and Gabi Stevens. And we're proud to have Warren Hammond and Laura J. Mixon back after absences.

Proceeds from the Friday charity auction and a portion of any Bubonicon 44 profits will benefit the (Jack) Williamson Library Collection at Eastern NM University, and the local Roadrunner Food Bank.

Bubonicon 44 opens with registration at 3:00 pm Friday the 24th and goes almost nonstop through 5 pm that Sunday. The first programming is at 4 pm, while the Art Show, Con Suite and Gaming open at 5 pm.

The theme for the weekend is "Mayan-punk" or "The End of the World - Apocalypse." The Marriott allows us to have five tracks of programming, so don't be surprised if you're torn between attending two or three panels/readings at a time!

Two Programming Notes - We're moving the Green Slime Awards, hosted by slime mistress Jessica Coyle, to halftime of Saturday's Costume Contest; and the Authors Afternoon Tea on Sunday will be a ticketed event with a small fee. There will be three Tea sessions of 45 minutes and 30 people maximum starting at 12:30 pm.

Of course, there's Gaming in three rooms at the west end of the event space, a larger Dealers Room, and a larger Art Show space! Registration even has its own nook in the north hallway. And don't forget about the hospitality suite - located on the 16th floor. Because of the smaller space and furniture we can't remove, we're estimating capacity in the con suite at 36-40 people at a time.

We really are in need of volunteer workers (go-fers) to help us throughout the weekend (see separate blurb earlier in this newsletter). If you can help, please email Julie Pascal at julie@pascal.org, or come to the meeting Friday, August 17, at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church on Ponderosa NE (home of ASFS).

Passes for the whole weekend are \$40 if purchased by August 4. After that, you'll have to wait to pay \$45 at the door. Daily memberships are \$15 Friday, \$25 Saturday and \$15 Sunday. Youths 14-17 years old are \$23 for the whole weekend. Children under 14 years are free when accompanied by an adult (or \$555 if left alone and a babysitter needed). Send payments by August 4 to Bubonicon Inc at PO Box 37257, Albuquerque, NM 87176.

The Bubonicon 44 special \$99 room rate (single-double occupancy) is only guaranteed through Monday, August 13, so get your reservation in now! 800-228-9290 to make your reservation.

Info is available from Craig at (505) 266-8905, Kristen at (505) 459-8734, by email at bubonicon@gmail.com, or through the website maintained by Mike McCommas at www.bubonicon.com.

Ode To Joy: Ray Bradbury

by Patricia Rogers

Ray Bradbury's life was all about Love and Joy! Ray radiated both till the day he died.

Ray said once, "You always have me to love. Friends and lovers come and go. People die. I'm always here to love. Love me!" And I did. With all my heart. I told Ray many times that he was the love of my life. Ray always gave the love back he received. One time when I was telling him how much he had made my life better, he held my hand, looked into my eyes and said, "You are a part of my life." Typing those words still makes me cry.

Ray said this during a speech in Los Alamos, NM, in September 1999, "I may not even be remembered 50 years after I am dead." All I could think of during the two-hour drive home from Los Alamos was, "Ray has to know he will be remembered forever!" I stayed up much of the night and wrote a letter to him.

Ray had scheduled a signing the next day at Page One Bookstore in Albuquerque where my husband worked. I was already set up to help Ray during the event, as I had done at several other signings. Ray's limo arrived early to the store, and we took him back to a quiet office and brought him lunch. I handed him this letter and then left him alone to eat in peace. When I came back into the office Ray looked up at me with tears streaming down his face. His sandwich was mostly uneaten and he held my letter in his hand. He reached up both arms to me for a hug. I started crying. We hugged for a long time and then went out to meet his many fans. I sat next to him all afternoon opening books and handing them to him to sign. Every now and then he would glance at me sideways with a knowing smile, and gently pat his coat pocket where he had stashed my letter. Several times he said, "This goes into my permanent collection."

The best eulogy I could give to Ray now is the letter I wrote him so many years ago -

Sept. 25, 1999

Dear Ray,

How do I thank you for --

--Halloween Trees

--Attic mummies

--Talking time machines

--The many tears I've shed while reading & listening to you

--"Joy Envy"

--Sending me to Janitzio Island one early November midnight, and to see the mummies of Guanajuato

--Taking me to Mars for a night meeting

--Helping me realize that the reason a carnival needs so much neon is to hide the darkness around it

--Reminding me to see everything through 12-year-old eyes

--Helping me to find the wonderful in all that's around me

For all the hours of joy and images your words have given me...

How do I thank you?

Can I walk your dog?

Paint your house?

Mow your lawn?

Some present I could buy you?

I can't think of anything I could do for you that comes close to what you have given me, and millions like me. All I can think to give you are my words expressing the joy you have brought into my life.

I sometimes dream regretfully about all of the people in history I didn't get to meet -- how maybe if I had been born in another time I could have chatted with Oscar Wilde and Arthur Conan Doyle, watched over Imhotep's shoulder while he drew out the first pyramid, heard Louis Armstrong electrify a room...

But wait: Ray says look around now -- see the wonder, and My God! This must be the best time ever to be alive. I can sit and listen to Ray Bradbury talk! See the electricity of a timeless 12-year-old twinkle in his eye. Feel the joy that radiates from him and touches every soul in the room.

I have gotten to watch a Saturn V illuminate the night and lumber slowly towards the sky to join the other candles there.

I have watched men walk on the moon, and been lucky enough to shake the hand of many of them.

I have watched live pictures from Mars!

And listened to Count Basie in person.

I must be one of the luckiest humans ever!

You Will live forever, Ray! Your words touch the soul. As long as there have been people, as long as there will be people, we will feel fear & excitement at the dark in the ravine, wonder what souls the wind is blowing around us, and worry at 3 a.m. if the light will ever come again. Your stories are timeless; they are loved by millions, and taught from one generation to the next. The crowd around me tonight in Los Alamos that looked at you with such love was 8 to 80.

One of the best moments of my life was when a dear friend of mine, whom I'd known since he was 3 years old, came to me last year at 17 and said, "I just wanted to thank you for giving me all those Ray Bradbury books from the time I was little. They have meant so much to me." I waited 'til he left to cry. It made me see that even a little sharing can touch the future.

You said maybe people will remember you in 50 years. No -- 500, 1000, 5000? I think we should carve your stories onto obelisks and 5000 years from now Mars will be found warmly encased in Nile mud, like the Rosetta stone waiting for Napoleon.

You have changed the future by touching so many lives.

Rameses left only 1000 children...

Thank you -
Love Always,
Patricia Rogers

When Ray got home he wrote me this note and slipped it into a signed copy of *The Halloween Tree*.

Dear Patricia,

Just a note to Thank You again for the terrific semi-poem love essay, which I will treasure always! & to wish you a fascinating, strange All Hallows Eve!"

Love!

From Ray B.
Oct, 1999

Ray loved life. When he lost loved ones, he mourned but kept on living and doing all the things he loved. Even when his body was failing him, his mind was still clear and sharp. During the last year Ray was weak and in a hospital bed that had been moved into his bedroom but his joy shined from within. It was like looking at the sun – I could not see his failing body because of his radiant glow. I think sometimes he wondered how his energetic 12-year-old spirit had, incorrectly, been encased in the body of an old man.

The wonderful thing is that Ray will live forever. His words are always within arm's reach. Even thinking about his stories makes me smile. My heart is breaking at his passing but is also joyous because I was so very lucky to have Ray as a part of my life.

BOOK REVIEW ROUND-UP

1636: The Kremlin Games by Eric Flint, Gorg Huff, & Paula Goodlett, 2012 Baen Books, hc \$25.00, 432 pages.

Review by Patricia Mathews

The Ring of Fire transported 20th Century Grantsville, West Virginia, to 1632 Germany, and all sorts of uptime technology and expertise began flowing into Central and Western Europe. In *1636: The Kremlin Games*, the news has made its way back to Russia, or Muscovy as it was still called, and the czar has sent two agents to find out if the tales are true. Vladimir Petrovich Gorchakov is a prince, and a friend of the czar. Boris Ivanovich Petrov is a bureaucrat and a spy, sent by the czar's father to accompany Vladimir on this errand, to keep the czar from looking like an idiot in case the stories are so much hot air, and to keep Vladimir out of trouble.

Bernie Zeppi is a slacker in a dead-end job. He's been sinking into alcoholism ever since his mother died downtime for lack of medicines that would have been readily available uptime. Getting out of Grantsville sounds like a good idea to him, even if it is to a frozen backwater with a sucky reputation. It's risky, which appeals to his low-level death wish. He, who had almost no education to speak of, would have the status of an uptime technical expert. Besides, he's been promised hot and cold running serf girls, an improvement on the luck with the ladies a loser can expect in Grantsville these days. When Boris and Vladimir offer him a job, he signs on the dotted line as fast as he can.

Why Bernie? "He's what we could get," Boris explains to his real boss, the Patriarch. So they stash Bernie on Vladimir's estate, now run by Vlad's sister Natasha – many Boris Badenuff jokes ensue, as well as cross-cultural adjustments and a lot of mechanical developments.

Because this is an Eric Flint book, the technology is not only transforming, but Bernie's uptime values act like yeast in feudal Russia's dough, quite a bit too easily. The entrenched aristocracy fights back, of course, and many adventures and escapes ensue.

What else can you ask? Well, the light touches like the Boris and Natasha jokes. A Russian princess writing to a barmaid asking for advice. The upbeat sensibility informing all the *1632* series. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

***Sky Dragons: Dragonriders of Pern* by Anne McCaffrey and Todd J. McCaffrey, 2012 Del Rey, hc \$26.00, 368 pages.**

Review by Becky C. Davis

A McCaffrey/Pern book is a guilty pleasure for me. Like caramel swirl vanilla ice cream with toffee bits in it. Pern dragons are sooo cool with their abilities of telepathy, flying and going "between" to both place and time locations. Dragonriders always solve difficult problems with communication and cooperation. Yeah, too naïve. So, I admit my prejudice in favor of this latest *Dragonriders of Pern* book.

Anne McCaffrey (who died in Nov. 2011 while this book was being edited) is co-author on *Sky Dragons*, but I think the plot lines are all Todd's contributions. Complicated. This is the fifth novel in the Anne/Todd collaboration on the Third Pass (500 years After Landing) of the Red Star and its deadly rain of Thread.

Heroine Xhinna is tall, strong, forceful, lesbian and the first known rider of a (male) blue dragon, Tazith. She is in love and companionship with Taria, girl rider of (female) green Coranth. Many of the men and boys who Impressed dragons are upset that a girl, about 17, has crashed their "club." Thread threatens Pern. There have been two devastating plagues: one which killed thousands of the mature fighting dragons, one of influenza which killed thousands of agrarian Holders and dragonriders. This installment in the series follows the survivors from *Dragon Harper* and *Dragon's Time* who have volunteered to go back three Turns (years) in time to regroup and build wings of mature dragons to fight Thread forward in their "normal" time. The land they camp on is hostile with tunnel snakes, which devour dragon eggs, and predator large cats which try to devour humans, dragons and hatchlings. Additionally, there is an emotional nexus within "Between" of the

two periods that prevents individuals from timing a flight forward to their normal time period.

Xhinna, as Wingleader to this dispossessed Weyr on a remote island, is responsible for both daily challenges of survival and the longer term development of the needed fighting wings of dragons. She cherishes, then almost loses her bond companion Taria. She is aided, in an almost supernatural way (excessive plot device, maybe?), by a 10-year-old girl, Jirana, who has special prescient "Sight" and is the youngest to Impress a queen dragonet from the clutch of a green dragon (another new Pern wrinkle).

Xhinna and Jirana go on Search back in time for dragon riders. They help stage a coup to install a stong "royal" and sympathetic leader on a Holder's throne. They endure terrible injuries from maleficent humans and seemingly ferocious animals. Between the two of these stubborn, driven and desperate personalities, they help build the Sky Weyr and the Sky Dragons in an unlikely and inhospitable place.

The notable features of *Sky Dragons* is that all principals are very young. They are anywhere from 8 to 17 years of age. They take on huge adult responsibilities and seldom complain or shirk their duties. All for the survival of the humans and their dragons. Yeah, naïve. And every principal character (except the 8 to 13 year-olds) is having babies. Lots of babies. A final notable feature is that is book is dedicated to Janis Ian, the spokesperson for "ugly girls, at seventeen."

Whether you are 17 or 70, unless urban fantasy tops dragon fantasy on your list, you will enjoy this book.

***Red Shirts: A Novel with Three Cudas* by John Scalzi, 2012 Tor Books, hc \$24.99, 320 pages.**

Review by Rebecca and Kevin Hewett

In his latest novel, John Scalzi takes on perhaps the most famous and infamous of modern science fiction tropes, the red shirt. Referring to throw away characters in the original *Star Trek* TV series, they had no background story, few if any lines, mostly wore red uniforms, and existed only to be killed off. Thus making the term "red shirt" ubiquitous with "expendable."

After a short, foreshadowing prologue, *Red Shirts* opens with Ensign Dahl, along with a small group of new transfers to the Universal Union (DubU) flagship Intrepid, beginning their tour of duty. They immediately notice the strange behavior of the crew, avoiding certain members of the senior staff and fleeing from off-ship, "away" missions where low ranking crew members (Scalzi's Red Shirts) get killed off in statistically significant high numbers. The deaths both are spectacular and ridiculous. Digging deeper into the phenomenon, Dahl and friends discover the mysterious crew member Jenkins and his wild theories of what's actually going on.

There is the statement that there are only X number of original stories, the rest are only variations on a theme and this book is no different. As he puts his own stamp on the theme, Scalzi acknowledges, within the story, those that came before. Unfortunately, for us he neglects to mention the one story that may be the first. Perhaps because it is fan fiction. Perhaps he doesn't know of it. Perhaps...Who knows? (No, we won't tell you what any of the stories are. That would be cheating.) Unlike those other stories though, Scalzi

gives the "bit players" center stage.

Scalzi leads you along, almost challenging you to guess what's going on, (go on, guess!) until he exposes the truth of the situation in which Dahl and his comrades find themselves. After that face palm moment, you will gladly go along for the ride to find out if the Red Shirts are able to save their own lives in spite of the designs of the powers that be. The end of the next to last chapter may have you shaking your fist and crying out to the heavens, "Curse you, John Scalzi!" But don't give up and don't ignore the three Cudas for the true wrap-up to the story.

Ultimately, Scalzi does for Red Shirts what other writers never have. He gives them honor and nobility. While you may continue to use the term "red shirt" for human cannon fodder, after reading *Red Shirts* you will never again take them for granted.

The Hewetts give this book four opposable digits up.

***Blackout: Newsflesh Book 3* by Mira Grant, 2012 Orbit Books, mmpb \$9.99, 672 pgs.**

Review by Jessica Coyle

Blackout is the third and concluding novel in Mira Grant's (aka Seanan McGuire) Newsflesh Trilogy of Zombie Apocalypse novels. Grant starts the novel off with a bang by bringing a previously dead character back to life through illegal cloning, and it only speeds off from there. The fast-paced, action-packed tale begins in two tracks; one follows Shaun Mason and the crew of the news blog *After the End Times* as they continue their quest to expose a widespread government conspiracy behind the origin of the zombie plague; the other examines the experiences of the clone who was brought back and implanted with the memories of her real self. These two tracks build until they collide in an explosive manner that brings the conspiracy crashing in on itself and destroying many around it.

Blackout, while not as brilliant as *Feed* (the first of the trilogy), is an amazing ride. Grant expertly manages the many threads of her elaborate conspiracy theory throughout three novels while never losing the reader along the way. The books are both a great action story and an examination of where modern online and blog culture could lead us in the future. And did I mention there are zombies?

***Shadows in Flight: The Shadow Series* by Orson Scott Card, 2012 Tor Books, hc \$21.99, 240 pages.**

Review by Fred A. Aiken

Shadows in Flight is the sequel to *Shadow of the Giant* and is the 12th novel in Orson Scott Card's Ender series. Based on the content, it appears this is the final installment in the series and, as such, attempts to tie up all of the loose ends. The faithful reader of the series may find this book more interesting than those of us who are reading the novel as a stand-alone book.

While Card did a good job of not boring the reader with a litany of prose outlining what had occurred in the earlier 11 novels; it puts the reader who has not read the last few books at a considerable disadvantage at understanding the basic plot. The first chapter lacked a creditable hook to hook the reader's attention as well as being devoid of action, conflict or tension. The reader is left to stumble in the dark for a con-

siderable while until the author reveals that the Bean family is desperately searching for a cure for the genetic defect that dooms the family to gigantism and premature death. This lack of action, conflict and tension permeates through the book, which is not typical for this talented author. When they finally do meet another spacecraft circulating a habitable planet and the participants correctly conclude that it is a hive ship, the action fails to pick up. In their investigation of the ship, they learn the reason why the hive society died out when first confronted by Ender and the human fleet. And Bean and his family find the secret to cure their genetic defect in order to live long healthy lives as a result.

I will confess that, despite its numerous shortcomings, the ending of the book brought a tear to my eyes. It did meet its stated objective of tying up the loose ends with the Ender series and is a fitting conclusion to that series.

***The Golden Lily: Bloodlines Book 2* by Richelle Mead, 2012 Razorbill, hc \$18.99, 417 pages.**

Review by Leah Ransom

Thanks to the *Twilight* Saga, the bookshelves are crowded with a plethora of teenage vampire love/adventure stores. *Golden Lily* is book two of the *Bloodlines* series and it feels like the purpose of *Lily* is to convince us to buy Richelle Mead's *Bloodlines*. The first 100 pages are back story, first new event is Sydney has a date, and in the last 100 pages a vampire gets kidnapped and Sydney leads the rescue team.

Unlike some Young Adult series that can cross genera and appeal to adults (i.e. *Twilight*, *Harry Potter*, and *Hunger Games*), *Lily* is firmly rooted in YA. In *Lily*, the romance (such as in *Twilight*) is juvenile, the intrigue (such as in *Potter*) is micro-thin, and the social commentary (such as in *Hunger*) is non-existent. *Lily* is just another a teen-vamp story that falls flat because it does not stand out from the crowd; it's missing an interesting twist.

The target audience is 12-year-old girls. Their parents can hand over the book in confidence knowing the girls won't be scared, titillated or unduly influenced as there is no violence, no romance and no thought provoking discussion. Fans of Sydney Sage will buy this book to see what happens next, however, it is likely they'll be disappointed.

***Masque of the Red Death* by Bethany Griffin, Greenwillow Books, hc \$17.99, 336 pages.**

Review by Jessica Coyle

Masque of the Red Death is a post-apocalyptic, steampunk novel based very loosely on the Edgar Allen Poe short story. Seventeen-year-old Araby Worth lives in a society that has been devastated by plague. The rich are kept alive by very expensive porcelain masks that Araby's father invented to filter the plague. After her twin dies, she chooses to shut herself off from almost everyone, and to spend her nights with her friend April at the Debauchery Club so that she can forget the outside world. While there, she meets two very different men; Will, who works at the nightclub to support his younger siblings, and Elliot, the dashing and spoiled nephew of the ruler of the city. Both of these lead her to make new discoveries about herself and the world in which she lives.

Bethany Griffin does a good job establishing a very gothic-infused steampunk landscape that definitely pays homage to Poe. I enjoyed the book, but it definitely hits some of the more recent YA tropes. Araby starts out as a very damaged and shut-down girl who is forced to grow up through the course of the novel, and there is a definite love triangle vibe going on between Araby, Will, and Elliot. The book definitely has a slower, literary style that will not appeal to every reader, and the story really only gains speed in the second half of the book. This means that the story ends on a definite cliffhanger that will leave readers waiting for the second book.

EDITOR NOTES THAT FIT THIS SPACE

Been a busy couple of months since the last newsletter, with events and emotions running to both extremes.

Last month's Albuquerque Comic Expo wore me out, but was really fun. Again, a few minor flaws here and there, but nothing to be ashamed of! The organizers are building ACE into being a national-level event and should be congratulated. Overall, a good job, gentlemen and ladies...

Jessica ran both ACE costume contests, so that kept us more than busy. I really enjoyed my time moderating Adam Baldwin's presentation (no real new *Firefly* news, but he said it was a good time for Joss Whedon to strike with the success of *The Avengers* - "Joss is boss," he quipped.). It went very well, and Adam was very happy with my hosting skills. Also found out that Katee Sackhoff is a nice individual. The *Wild Cards* panel and signing was lightly attended (being opposite Stan Lee), but again went well.

On the other hand, we've had two deaths to contend with. Jessica's Aunt Donna passed away at the beginning of May, and now we've been busy a couple of weekends helping her uncle deal with Donna's clothes, shoes and books. We have a mountain of books sitting in our dining area right now! (We need a new bookcase for the ones we're keeping.)

And the death of local artist Randy Clark has made me reflective. I hadn't seen him in five or six years, and he had pulled away from the local SF community. But I had known him since high school, and I always admired his talent. I also have seen his siblings as they clear out his apartment, and several items have been donated for the auctions at Bubonicon. Sigh. Death and its aftermath suck.

Finally, this week has been tough on the ol' *ASFacts* as our older cat was sick all over our bed, and then our sewer line backed up into the utility room and bathroom (during the laundry for said sick event). Oh, mopping up water is fun! And then the plumber - Good times, good times...

Yep, must be six weeks 'til Bubonicon. Time for the stress and the heat outside to ramp up. Yee haw! Just keep swimming, just keep swimming.

Thanks this issue to Patricia Rogers, Becky Davis, Patricia Mathews, Randi & Kevin Hewett, Fred Aiken, Leah Ransom and Jessica Coyle. Submissions are always appreciated. *NEXT DEADLINE IS SUN, OCT 7...*

Hope to see you all at Bubonicon 44. That's **August 24-26**, Albuquerque Marriott Uptown, and then in October's *ASFacts*. -- Craig C

